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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 000637

SIPDIS

CAIRO FOR MAXSTADT, TASHKENT FOR BURKHALTER, PARIS FOR OECD/IEA

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TAGS: [EPET](#) [PINS](#) [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [PARM](#) [PHUM](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: A CONVERSATION WITH ONE IJAW

REF: A. EMAIL SCHWEIKERT/BROWNE MARCH 22

[1B](#). LAGOS 505  
[1C](#). ABUJA 448  
[1D](#). ABUJA 449  
[1E](#). LAGOS 504

Classified By: CONSUL GENERAL ROBYN HINSON-JONES.  
REASON 1.5 (C) AND (D).

1.(C) Summary: In a March 25 telecon with EconOff, Azibola Robert, President of Niger Delta Human and Environmental Rescue Organization (ND-HERO), discussed the ongoing crisis in the Niger Delta. End summary.

[12](#). (C) ND-HERO President Azibola Robert, an Ijaw from Bayelsa State, whose headquarters are in Port Harcourt, Rivers State said that the Ijaws have planned massive protests in the major cities, to include Port Harcourt, Warri, and possibly Abuja to focus on their concerns. The dates of the demonstrations are still to be determined, but, they could take place in the next few days. The concerns are land ownership, ward delineation, oil revenue and voter registration. Although the demonstrations failed to begin on March 23 as Robert had predicted, he said tensions are high within the Ijaw community and he fears that the confrontations could escalate into all of the states with Ijaw populations - Bayelsa, Delta, Rivers and even to Akwa Ibom.

[13](#). (C) According to Robert, Delta State Governor Ibori tried to diffuse the tensions, but the rumor of in-house political problems between the Governor and his Peoples Democratic Party gave the appearance of a government not in control of the security forces not to mention the youth. Bayelsa State government officials have also been ineffectual in arresting the crisis and, Robert stated, there is no a clear directive from the Ijaw leaders. According to Robert, the elders and leaders lack the capacity to get out to the villages and out-lying areas to talk to the Ijaw youth. He said that on one occasion an attempt was made to capture Ijaws suspected of causing problems. Community persons worked with the military only to find themselves targeted by the same military. The Ijaws were arrested for having arms that were originally supplied by military to aid them in capturing Ijaw criminal suspects. Based on that experience, Ijaws are skeptical about the military's intentions.

[14](#). (C) Robert speculated that arms may be entering Nigeria from neighboring countries, in particular Cameroon via a direct sea route. He further speculated that some of the monies paid by oil companies to the Ijaws as direct compensation or ransom may be used to purchase arms. According to Robert, the more arms and ammunition, the better their bargaining power. He does not think that wealthy individuals either in Nigeria or abroad are supplying the arms for their own nefarious purposes.

[15](#). (C) Robert does believe, however, that wealthy people are working with sea pirates, robbers and criminals who sabotage the pipelines. When the criminals are apprehended by the military, they are usually released quickly with only a small fine imposed. He added that in some cases, the military have stopped arresting people connected to certain prominent individuals. He claimed to be aware of some of the individuals involved but would not name them.

[16](#). (C) The GON has recently stated that Shell Petroleum Development Company Nigeria Limited (SPDC) should pay the Ijaws of Bayelsa State USD 1.5bn in compensation for the degradation to their lands and corresponding social and physical ills. Robert stated that his contact at SPDC told

him that the company will not pay. This is a sleeper issue that it is not yet finished, but, he predicted that there could be a serious conflict before the matter is resolved.

17. (C) Robert said that the recent attack on the home of MOSOP President Ledum Mitee (Ref A) has all of the markings of an assassination attempt and not a robbery since no property was taken. Mitee was not at home during the attempt. Mitee is connected with various human rights groups in Port Harcourt. According to Robert, many people are unhappy with Mitee. One week before Mitee went abroad, he was invited by GON's State Security Service for "a chat". According to Robert, Mitee was increasingly voicing concerns about the GON. He spoke on 93.7 radio about the murder of Marshall Harry (Reftels B and E), the late South-South Zonal Vice Chairman of the All Nigerian People's Party. In addition, he has issued press statements about issues concerning the Ogoni and the GON. He is also not in good odor in Bayelsa State as he was the attorney in the corruption case against Chief Diepreye Alameyeseigha, the Governor of Bayelsa State.

18. (C) During the conversation with EconOff, Robert noted that the Ijaws' grievances are with the GON and not the oil companies. International oil companies, however, are a means to reach the GON where it hurts-in the pocketbook. He predicted that an early end to the crisis is not likely to be forthcoming and that the Ijaws are planning further unspecified action. Post will continue close monitoring of the crisis and its potential for long-term impact on the oil sector.

HINSON-JONES